

## **THE AMERICAN VETERAN**

### **EPISODE 9**

#### **PART 2**

JIM BENSON, HOST: VA IS FIGHTING HOMELESSNESS WITH PROGRAMS THAT EMPOWER VETERANS TO TAKE BACK CONTROL OF THEIR LIVES.

DANIELLE MCDAVIT TAKES US TO FITZWILLIAM, NEW HAMPSHIRE, A PICTURESQUE NEW ENGLAND TOWN, AND THE SETTING FOR A VERY SPECIAL FARM, THAT WITH VA'S HELP, WAS BUILT TO CONQUER HOMELESSNESS.

DANIELLE MCDAVIT, REPORTING: WAKING UP ON THE FARM. A RETREAT, A SAFE HAVEN, A SECOND CHANCE. HERE, PIGS DO FLY.

TWELVE HOMELESS VETERANS ON A MISSION TO SAVE THEMSELVES - THEIR WORK ON THE FARM, LABORIOUS AND REWARDING.

EDWARD COLLINS, VETERAN RESIDENT: WE FEED THE ANIMALS, THEN WE HAVE A COFFEE BREAK, THEN WE CLEAN ALL THE STALLS AND THE PENS.

DAVID WARD VETERAN RESIDENT: THIS IS THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE THAT I'VE WORKED ON A FARM, AND TO ME IT'S A NEW EXPERANCE, WHICH IS GOOD. IT HELPS ME TO BE OPEN-MINDED AND LEARN. I'VE GOT A LOT OF BENEFITS SINCE I'VE BEEN HERE.

MCDAVIT: LESLIE LIGHTFOOT RUNS "VETERAN VICTORY FARM" AND SEVERAL OTHER HOMELESS OUTREACH PROGRAMS.

LESLIE LIGHTFOOT, CEO, VETERAN HOSPICE HOMESTEAD: BACK IN THE 20'S AND 30'S, FARMS WERE SUCH A GREAT IDEA FOR PEOPLE WHO DIDN'T HAVE MONEY. IT GAVE THEM SOME INTEGRITY AND SOME SELF ESTEEM TO BE ABLE TO GROW VEGETABLES AND TO ACTUALLY GIVE BACK TO THE COMMUNITY. IT JUST KIND OF FELL INTO PLACE. IT JUST SEEMED LIKE THE LOGICAL THING TO DO.

MCDAVIT: LIGHTFOOT ENLISTED THE HELP OF STEPHEN LEDWELL, A VETERAN HIMSELF, TO BE THE CASE MANAGER AT THIS WORKING ORGANIC VEGETABLE FARM. HE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT FARMING.

STEPHEN LEDWELL, CASE MANAGER: LESLIE BOUGHT ME A BOOK ON CHICKENS, HOW TO RAISE CHICKENS.

MCDAVIT: A HOW TO? CHICKENS FOR DUMMIES?

LEDWELL: YES, ORGANIC FARMING - THE BASICS OF WHAT ORGANIC MATERIAL WOULD WORK FOR FERTILIZER. IT'S BASICALLY BEEN TRIAL AND ERROR, BUT VERY SUCCESSFUL.

MCDAVIT: AS SUCCESSFUL AS THE THERAPY PROGRAM THAT MOTIVATES THESE VETERANS WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS.

LEDWELL: WHEN I'M DOWN ON MY HANDS AND KNEES IN THE DIRT WITH THEM, THEY TEND TO OPEN UP AND SHARE WHAT'S BEEN GOING ON IN THEIR LIFE, AND THEY KNOW THAT I IDENTIFY WITH THAT, AND THAT BARRIER, THAT TRUST ISSUE, IS NO LONGER THERE.

MCDAVIT: EVERY DAY, LEDWELL LEADS THE VETERANS THROUGH PROJECTS FROM START TO FINISH.

LEDWELL: RIGHT NOW THEY'RE LAYING OUT THE PERIMETER FOR A FIELD THAT WE'RE GONNA TURN INTO A GRAZING Paddock FOR THE HORSES. THEY'RE BANGING IN THE STAKES, THE RODS THAT WILL HOLD THE ELECTRIC FENCE TAPE ALL THE WAY AROUND THE FIELD, WHICH WILL CONTAIN THE ANIMALS IN THE FIELD.

THE GUYS FULLY UNDERSTAND WHAT THE PROJECT IS IN FRONT OF THEM RIGHT NOW AND THEY'RE GONNA PUT IT IN ACTION AND IN A COUPLE HOURS WE'LL HAVE A FULL FIELD FUNCTIONING WITH THE HORSES IN THERE.

MCDAVIT: AFTER THE GROUP COMPLETES THEIR PROJECT, THEY TALK ABOUT IT.

LEDWELL: WE SIT DOWN AT THE TABLE, WORK OUT ANY PROBLEMS IF ANY OCCURRED, AND THEN WE TALK ABOUT THE REWARD OF HOW IT FEELS, YOU KNOW, TO PROVIDE ANOTHER GRAZING AREA FOR THE ANIMALS.

MCDAVIT: WHILE THE FARM PROGRAM STARTED OUT WITHOUT THE ANIMALS, THEY HAVE BECOME A CRUCIAL PART OF VETERAN VICTORY FARM.

LEDWELL: WE GIVE A NEW CLIENT THAT COMES IN THE RESPONSIBILITY OF HANDLING THE GOATS – THEY'RE EASIER, THEY'RE GENTLER, THEY'RE SMALLER. AND AS THEY GET MORE COMFORTABLE WITH THIS ANIMAL, THEN WE ROTATE THEM OUT, TO THE CHICKENS AND THE DUCKS, AND EVENTUALLY THE HORSES.

LIGHTFOOT: ANIMALS ARE SUCH GREAT THERAPY FOR PEOPLE -- EVEN A DOG OR A CAT. BUT WHEN YOU REALLY CAN GET TOGETHER WITH A BIG ANIMAL AND HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF IT AND REALIZE THAT IT DEPENDS TOTALLY ON YOU FOR ITS FOOD AND ITS ATTENTION, IT'S REALLY HEALTHY FOR THE GUYS.

LEDWELL: THE THERAPEUTIC VALUE OF ALL THE FARM ANIMALS WE'VE JUST BEEN SEEING ARE PROBABLY GETTING THE THERAPEUTIC VALUE OF ABOUT A YEAR AND A HALF TO TWO YEARS OF THERAPY.

BILL KRAMER, VETERAN RESIDENT: I WAS HOMELESS FOR SIX MONTHS. ALCOHOL HAD GOTTEN THE BEST OF ME. I WAS CRAZY. I WAS JUST CONSUMED WITH ALCOHOL. I COULDN'T GET ME LIFE TOGETHER.

MCDAVIT: NOW SOBER FOR 98 DAYS, AND COUNTING.

KRAMER: THE SUPPORT HERE IS FANTASTIC.

MCDAVIT: FANTASTIC, JUST LIKE THE FARM ITSELF. TO BUILD IT SO PEOPLE WOULD COME – THAT TOOK MONEY.

MCDAVIT: LESLIE LIGHTFOOT'S DREAM – BUILDING THIS 80-ACRE WORKING FARM FOR HOMELESS VETERANS – WAS REALIZED BECAUSE OF A VA GRANT.

PETER DOUGHERTY, DIRECTOR, VA HOMELESS PROGRAMS: WHAT LESLIE REPRESENTS, IS THAT PARTNERSHIP. AND WE'RE PARTNERS IN A WHOLE VARIETY OF PLACES, INCLUDING THERE.

MCDAVIT: PETER DOUGHERTY OVERSEES VA HOMELESS OUTREACH, INCLUDING THE GRANT & PER DIEM PROGRAM USED FOR THE VETERAN VICTORY FARM. THE "GRANT" PART FUNDS UP TO 65 PERCENT OF THE COST OF THE FACILITY FOR TRANSITIONAL HOUSING. THE "PER DIEM" PART HELPS FUND OPERATIONAL COSTS. DOUGHERTY HOPES THE COMBINED FUNDING CONTINUES TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

DOUGHERTY: THAT'S WHAT THE FARM DOES. IT HELPS CHANGE THE END OF THE STORY. IT TAKES YOU FROM A STORY WHERE YOU HAVE DESPAIR, AND YOU SEEM HOPELESS – TO A POINT WHERE YOU HAVE DIGNITY, YOU TAKE ON PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY, AND YOU HAVE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.

BENSON: THE FARM JUST CELEBRATED THE END OF ITS HARVEST AND ITS FIRST YEAR IN BUSINESS.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE GRANT & PER DIEM PROGRAM,  
GO TO THIS WEB SITE: [WWW-DOT-VA-DOT-GOV](http://WWW-DOT-VA-DOT-GOV), SLASH HOMELESS.

THE EFFECTS OF THIS HURRICANE SEASON ARE FAR FROM OVER.  
MANY VETERANS AND VA STAFF ARE STILL HOMELESS. VA IS HELPING  
THEM GET THEIR LIVES BACK ON TRACK.

HERE IS HOW TO CONTACT VA IF  
YOU NEED HELP WITH YOUR BENEFITS:

ON THE INTERNET AT [WWW DOT VA DOT GOV](http://WWW.DOT.VA.DOT.GOV); BY PHONE, CALL 10800-  
827-1000 FOR FINANCIAL BENEFITS OR 1-800-507-4571 FOR HEALTH  
BENEFITS

BENSON: THIS MOMENT IN HISTORY – THE OFFICIAL END OF WORLD  
WAR TWO. 60 YEARS LATER, THOUSANDS OF VETERANS IN NATION'S  
CAPITAL COMMEMORATE THE END OF THE WAR AND THE END OF AN  
ERA.

UNIDENTIFIED NARRATOR OF HISTORICAL FOOTAGE OF JAPANESE  
SURRENDER CEREMONY ABOARD THE BATTLESHIP MISSOURI: ABOARD  
THE BATTLESHIP MISSOURI, AN AWESOME CEREMONY WAS TO TAKE  
PLACE.

BENSON: JAPAN'S SURRENDER, SEPTEMBER SECOND, 1945.

GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR ABOARD THE BATTLESHIP MISSOURI:  
LET US PRAY THAT PEACE BE NOW RESTORED TO THE WORLD.

BENSON: GENERAL DOUGLAS MACARTHUR, MAKING HISTORY ABOARD  
THE USS MISSOURI, ANCHORED IN TOKYO BAY.

60 YEARS LATER, A BAND OF BROTHERS, TRAVELING WITH A GROUP  
FROM OHIO, COMMEMORATE THE ANNIVERSARY WITH A JOURNEY TO  
WASHINGTON, DC. RUFUS "RV" VENABLE – THE OLDEST SURVIVING  
BROTHER – WAS A NAVY CORPSMAN IN THE PACIFIC THEATER –  
CARING FOR WOUNDED MARINES.

RUFUS "RV" VENABLE, WW II VETERAN: I WAS ON A LITTLE ISLAND  
ABOUT 40 MILES SOUTHEAST OF OKINAWA.

BENSON: AND THOUSANDS OF MILES AWAY FROM HIS BROTHERS.

JAMES VENABLE, WW II VETERAN: NEVER SAW OR HEARD FROM ANY  
OF THEM THE WHOLE TIME I WAS IN THE SERVICE.

BENSON: AS A SOLDIER, JAMES VENABLE FOUGHT ACROSS NORTH AFRICA AND ITALY.

JAMES VENABLE: WE WERE REALLY EXCITED WHEN WE HEARD THAT THE WAR HAD ENDED AND WE KNEW WE WERE ON OUR WAY HOME. I NEVER DREAMED THAT I WOULD STILL BE AROUND AT THIS POINT, YOU KNOW.

BENSON: THREE OF THE FOUR VENABLE BROTHERS, VISITING THE WORLD WAR TWO MEMORIAL FOR THE FIRST TIME: ERNEST, THE YOUNGEST, WAS A CHIEF ELECTRICIAN WITH THE ARMY TRANSPORTATION SERVICE. HIS OLDEST BROTHER, WILLIAM, PASSED AWAY WITHOUT SEEING THIS PATRIOTIC TRIBUTE.

ERNEST VENABLE, WW II VETERAN: HE MADE IT THROUGH THE WAR, BUT HE DIED IN 88.

RUFUS VENABLE: "YOU GOTTA THINK ABOUT HOW GREAT IT COULD'VE BEEN IF HE'D BEEN ALONG.

BENSON: STILL, THE VENABLE BROTHERS ARE GRATEFUL FOR THEIR VISIT, AND ON SUCH A SPECIAL DAY.

JAMES AND RUFAS VENABLE: THOSE ARE THE HEROES. THEY ARE THE REAL HEROES.

BENSON: LIKE THE VENABLES' REACTION TO THE MEMORIAL, THE SEPTEMBER SECOND CEREMONIES MIX SOMBER REMEMBRANCE, AND CELEBRATION -- THE EVENT TRANSFORMING THE MALL INTO A 40'S SWING DANCE. THE PATRIOTIC DISPLAY, ATTRACTING DIGNITARIES FROM THE U.S. AND ABROAD.

R. JAMES NICHOLSON, SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS: AS THE SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS, I AM THE STEWARD OF OUR NATION'S GRATITUDE TO OUR VETERANS.

I WANT TO THANK, PARTICULARLY, THOSE VETERANS OF WORLD WAR TWO, WHO SIXTY YEARS AGO TODAY, CLIMBED OUT OF THEIR COCKPITS AND THEIR FOXHOLES AND THEIR TANKS. THEY CAME TO THE SURFACE OF THE WORLD'S OCEANS, ALL TO CELEBRATE THE VICTORY WHICH THEY HAD JUST MADE POSSIBLE.

YOU, THE REMAINING BROTHERHOOD OF SIXTEEN MILLION YOUNG WARRIORS ALIVE IN NINETEEN FORTY FIVE, YOU ARE OUR GUESTS OF HONOR TONIGHT.

BENSON: HEROS IN-DEED. MORE THAN FOUR HUNDRED THOUSAND OF THE GREATEST GENERATION DIED SERVING OUR COUNTRY. ABOUT THREE AND A HALF MILLION WORLD WAR TWO VETERANS ARE ALIVE TODAY.

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